

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
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P R 200830Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6918
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMATOUM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY PARIS

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: UR, US, ET, SO, XJ
7?3:5: HARSH TASS STATEMENT ON THE HORN OF AFRICA

REF: MOSCOW 0777

1. THE TASS STATEMENT ON SOMALIA WHICH APPEARS IN PRAVDA OF JANUARY 19 (ASSUME DEPARTMENT HAS TEXT) IMPRESSES US AS A SHARP, DEFENSIVE DOCUMENT. ITS LANGUAGE IS CHARACTERISTIC OF SOVIET RHETORIC WHEN MOSCOW IS DETERMINED TO PURSUE A POLITICAL ADVANTAGE BUT FEELS THAT IT MUST RESPOND TO OUTSIDE CRITICISM. THE MANNER OF THIS RESPONSE, HOWEVER, SEEMS UNUSUALLY STRIDENT, PARTICULARLY IN ITS ACCUSATIONS OF WESTERN INTENTIONS TO INTER- VENE IN THE SOMALI-EHTIOPIAN FIGHTING. EQUALLY SHARP ARE THE STATEMENT'S REPETITION OF EARLIER CHARGES THAT THE U.S. (NOT DIRECTLY NAMED ANYWHERE IN THE TASS STATEMENT) HAS LIED IN DENYING THAT IT PROVIDES WEAPONS TO SOMALIA AND THE ASSERTION
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THAT (U.S.) DECLARATIONS ON THE FIGHTING ARE INTENDED "TO INTIMIDATE" THE USSR AS WELL AS EHTIOPIA. WE NOTE ALSO THAT TASS HAS REBUTED VIGOROUSLY REPORTS OF THE PRESENCE IN SOMALIA OF SOVIET AND CUBAN PERSONNEL AS WELL AS OF DEFENSE MINISTER USTINOV (REFTEL). (ALSO PRAVDA CARRIES A REPORT OF THE U.S. STATEMENT THAT IT IS NOT PROVIDING WEAPONS TO SOMALIA AND THAT IT SUPPORTS A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT.)

2. THE WORDING OF THE TASS STATEMENT SUGGESTS: A) WISH TO REFUTE SOMALIAN CHARGES OF A PLANNED INVASION; B) SOME DEGREE OF UNEASINESS OVER THE POSSIBLE PROPAGANDA EFFECTIVENESS OF RECENT U.S. STATEMENTS ON THE SITUATION IN THE HORN; AND C) CONCERN OVER THE POSSIBLE EFFECTS OF THESE STATEMENTS ON AFRICAN AND OAU CONSIDERATION OF THE MATTER. HOWEVER, TASS'S RESPONSE TO THESE STATEMENTS ACTUALLY SEEMS INTENDED TO ESCALATE THE ISSUE TO A QUALITATIVELY HIGHER LEVEL OF TENSION BETWEEN THE U.S. AND THE USSR. THE CONCLUDING WARNING, ALTHOUGH RITUALISTIC IN SUCH STATEMENTS, ALSO APPEARS GRATUITOUSLY HARSH UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN THAT IT ACCUSES THE U.S. OF ENCOURAGING THE AGGRESSOR AND OF TAKING STEPS WHICH WILL LEAD TO A "NEW AGGRAVATION OF THE SITUATION THROUGHOUT THE WORLD."

3. EMBASSY IS DEALING IN SEPTEL WITH THIS AND OTHER RECENT SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY STATEMENTS AS EVIDENCE OF A NEW HARSHER LINE ON U.S. FOREIGN POLICY.
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